

# First record of Golden-naped Weaver *Ploceus aureonucha* in Uganda

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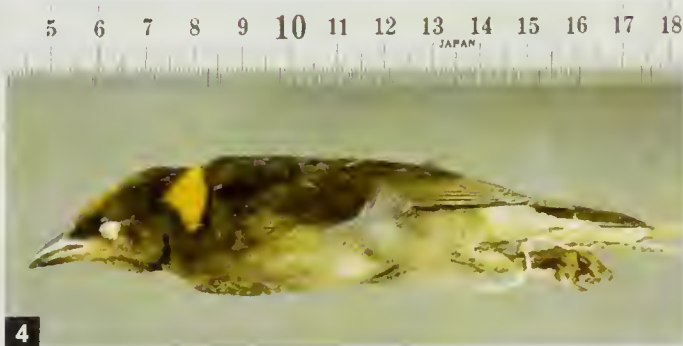
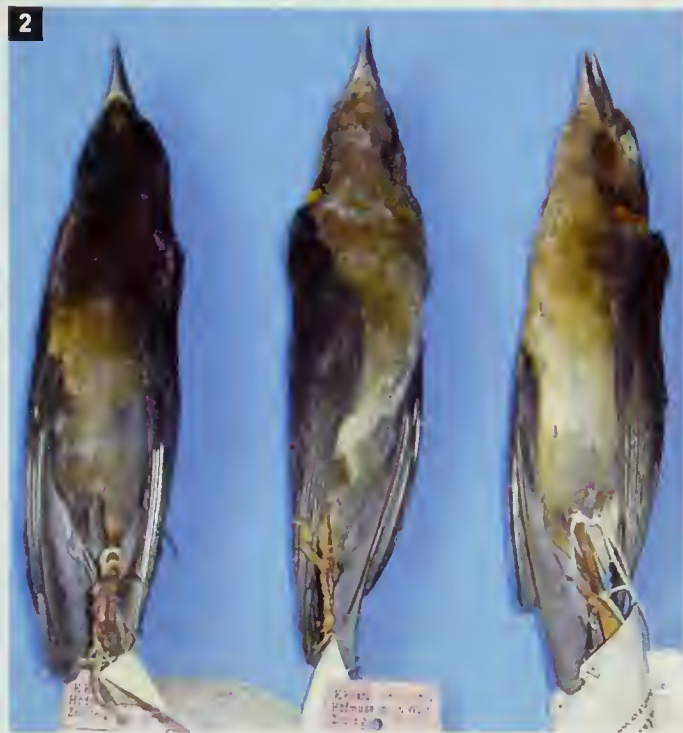
**Première mention du Tisserin à nuque d'or *Ploceus aureonucha* pour l'Ouganda.** Un couple de Tisserins à nuque d'or *Ploceus aureonucha* a été observé dans le Parc National de Semliki, Ouganda, le 1 août 2007. L'espèce, qui est considérée comme menacée d'extinction, n'était connue que d'une petite partie de la Forêt de l'Ituri, au Congo-Kinshasa. L'observation rapportée ici étend son aire de distribution de 80 km à l'est.

On 1 August 2006, we observed two Golden-naped Weavers *Ploceus aureonucha* in Semliki National Park, Uganda. We arrived at the head of the Kirumia trail at 07.00 hrs and proceeded north through lowland forest towards the Semliki River. After c.4 km, when we passed the first oxbow lake, we stopped at 11.30 hrs (00°49'N 30°05'S; 729 m). The forest was fairly quiet when we heard bird calls from mid levels and found a pair of Crested Malimbos *Malimbus malimbicus*, then spotted two mostly dark-plumaged forest weavers high in the canopy of a large (30 m) Uganda ironwood *Cynometra alexandri* tree. The weavers were on the move, perching for short periods, occasionally gleaning insects on canopy branches of the tree. When one bird fed on the side of a branch in the manner of an arboreal nuthatch, we had views of the pale mantle, yellow onto the back; it also had a dark rusty-brown crown and nape. The other bird lacked yellow on the back but had a greyish-yellow forehead or crown and golden-yellow nape. In both birds, which were perhaps a pair, the eyes and feet were dark, the wings blackish, the underparts either blackish or grey on the throat and breast, and paler grey to whitish on the belly and undertail-coverts. We watched the birds for c.5–7 minutes, through the leaves and the diffuse light of the forest into an overcast grey sky. At the same site two days later we did not see the birds again.

Our first impression, based on the birds' feeding behaviour, was of Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor*, but the Semliki weavers were paler on the crown; or Brown-capped Weaver *P. insignis* or Preuss's Weaver *P. preussi*, which are bright yellow on the crown; but unlike these, the Semliki weavers were blackish and grey on the underparts (and black on the rump, unlike *C. preussi*). We found no good match amongst the East African weavers (Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002), but the illustration in Sinclair & Ryan (2000), although

dark, suggested the Central African *P. aureonucha*. Subsequently, in the library, we recognised the Semliki birds as *P. aureonucha* of the Ituri Forest region of Congo, from the illustration in Chapin (1954) and the description and illustration in *The Birds of Africa* (Craig 2004).

However, it was only upon examining photographs of *P. aureonucha* specimens in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), the Naturhistorische Museum Wien (NMW) and Stockholm Natural History Museum (NRM), that we became sure of the identification. The AMNH specimens are an adult male and two immature males (following Chapin 1954). The adult male (AMNH 264278) is rusty brown on the top of the head, bright rufous to golden on the nape and bright yellow on the back, black on the throat and rusty brown on the breast, and grey to white on the breast and undertail-coverts. The other two had unenlarged testes. One (AMNH 264279), in moult from immature to adult plumage, is dull yellowish on the forehead and crown, dark from the face (rufous-black) through a band across the back of the head, golden-yellow on the nape and black on the back; the underparts are mixed pale grey and black on the throat, mixed grey and rusty brown on the breast, and grey on the belly and undertail-coverts; it is marked 's.n.q.f.o.' (skull not quite fully ossified). The other (AMNH 264280) has a mixed black and dull yellow crown and a yellow nape, the back is black, and the underparts unmarked grey from the throat to belly. One of the three NMW specimens in the type series, taken in 1910 by Grauer (Figs. 1–2), is a female (NMW 4584); it has the forehead and forecrown dull yellow, like the rest of the crown black and the nape golden-yellow, like AMNH 264279. NMW 4583 is an adult male, the plumage is like AMNH 264278. NMW 4585



is similar to NMW 5484 and AMNH 264279 but has some yellow on the back. The adult male *P. aureonucha* is similar to the male illustration in Fry & Keith (2004), and the immature males are similar to the female Golden-naped Weaver in that book, and to NMW 4584. Finally, the immature female taken by Gyldenstolpe in 1921 (NRM 601271; illustrated in Gyldenstolpe 1924) has the forehead dark yellowish, the crown black and the nape golden-yellow (Figs. 3–4). The Semliki weavers were clearly *P. aureonucha* by their yellowish forehead or crown and yellow nape, and in one bird by the yellow back. Craig (2005) suggested that *P. aureonucha* may represent previously unrecognised, subadult, plumages of Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor*; however, his measurements reveal *P. aureonucha* to be smaller than *P. tricolor*. Further observations on these weavers are needed.

Golden-naped Weaver is known only from the Ituri Forest in eastern Congo-Kinshasa, where it was discovered in 1910 (Sassi 1920). Beside the three birds collected in 1910, the type series in NMW, four other specimens have been taken: one in 1921 (now in the Stockholm museum; a few others were seen) and the three AMNH birds in 1926 (including two from a flock of 20–25 birds) (Chapin 1954, Collar & Stuart 1985, Collar *et al.* 1994, BirdLife International 2000, Craig 2005). The weaver went unrecorded for the next 60 years,

Figures 1–2. Type series of Golden-naped Weaver *Ploceus aureonucha* Sassi, 1920, in the Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, Austria. Left to right, dorsal and ventral: adult male NMW 4583, adult female NMW 4584, moulting male NMW 4585 (E. Bauernfeind)

Série type du Tisserin à nuque d’or *Ploceus aureonucha* Sassi, 1920, dans le Naturhistorische Museum Wien, Autriche. De gauche à droite, vues dorsales et ventrales: mâle adulte NMW 4583, femelle adulte NMW 4584, mâle en mue NMW 4585 (E. Bauernfeind)

Figures 3–4. Immature female Golden-naped Weaver *Ploceus aureonucha* (NRM 601271), taken at Campi ya Wambutu, west of Irumu, Congo-Kinshasa, on 11 June 1921, and held in the Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet, Stockholm (Göran Frisk)

Tisserin à nuque d’or *Ploceus aureonucha* (NRM 601271), femelle immature collecté à Campi ya Wambutu, à l’ouest de Irumu, Congo-Kinshasa, le 11 juin 1921, et détenu par le Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet, Stockholm (Göran Frisk)

until 1986, when it was observed several times, once in a flock of up to 60 weavers at Epulu, followed by a record in 1994 of a pair with young at the same locality (Collar *et al.* 1994, Craig 2005). The record reported here is the first outside Congo-Kinshasa and extends the known range 80 km east.

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